

Operation Good CheerSM

"Making Christmas wishes come true"

Celebrating
50
years



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50
years

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**A Christmas Gift Giving Program
for Children in Foster Care**

Child and Family Services of Michigan, Inc. (CFSM), sponsors and coordinates **Operation Good CheerSM**, an entirely volunteer Christmas gift-giving program for thousands of children, teens, and adults with disabilities in foster care, residential treatment, and group homes who might not otherwise share in the joys and fond memories of holiday festivities.

In Michigan on any given day, approximately 13,000 children reside in foster care until they can be safely returned to their families or other permanent setting. Depending upon their family circumstances, it's entirely possible some of these children have never before received Christmas gifts. Operation Good CheerSM strives to provide not just gifts, but a sense of **love and caring, self-importance and belonging.**



For its very first effort in **1971**, Operation Good CheerSM provided gifts to **66 children**. Since then, more than **100,000 children, youth, and adults with disabilities** have received Christmas gifts through the generosity of **thousands of volunteers** across Michigan. In **2019**, the program made Christmas memorable for more than **7,100** of Michigan's children and adults in foster care!

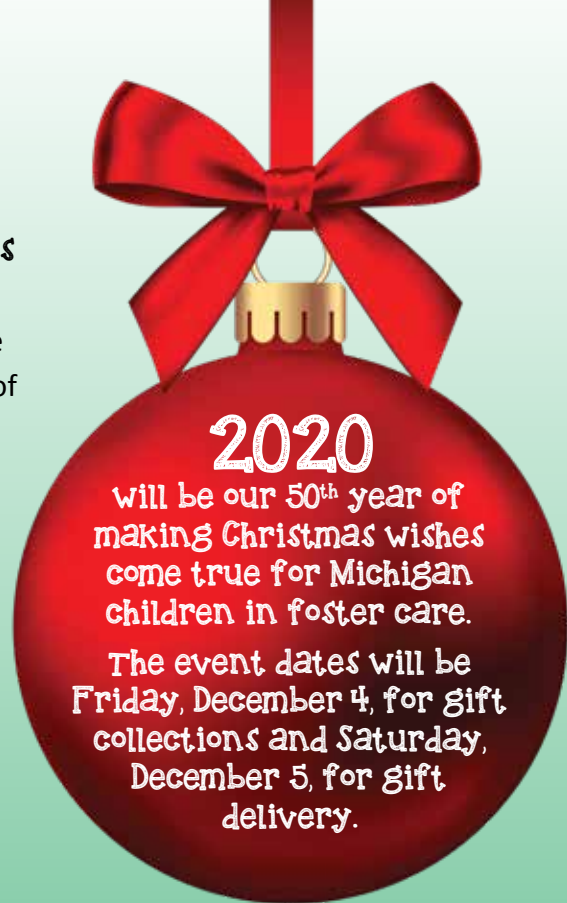
How it all comes together...

Donor groups and individuals **purchase and wrap Christmas gifts**, fulfilling each child's "wish list."

On the first Friday in December at donor sites, these gifts are **picked up, loaded, and transported** by volunteer trucking companies and their drivers to **Pentastar Aviation at Oakland County International Airport** in Waterford, MI. There, ground crew volunteers unload and sort the gifts according to their destinations.

The next day, in the "**Spirit of Good Cheer**," volunteer pilots and drivers use their aircraft and vehicles to **transport thousands of gifts to local airports across Michigan**. At each airport, agency volunteers gather the gifts and **deliver** them to recipients for opening on Christmas morning.

After the holidays, gift recipients **send personalized thank-you notes** to CFMS that are matched to the donors and forwarded.



In Memorium

CONSTANTINE “TAKI” GEORGE KORTIDIS

November 1, 1937 – June 25, 2008

A good friend, mentor, flight instructor, and founder of
Operation Good CheerSM

In 1971, Taki challenged fellow co-workers at Ford Motor Company to do something more meaningful in the spirit of the holidays than merely exchanging greeting cards. They responded by giving Taki a small sum of money and challenged him to find an appropriate charity. He partnered with Child and Family Services of Michigan, Inc., and from those humble beginnings grew Operation Good CheerSM and Taki's lifelong commitment to Michigan's foster children. Today, Operation Good CheerSM provides Christmas gifts to over 7,000 children in foster care every year. Annually, hundreds of donors, volunteers, trucking companies, drivers, aircraft operators and pilots work together to provide Christmas gifts to children in foster care throughout the state of Michigan.





1979



1989



1998



2005



2010

Celebrating 50 years

Operation Good CheerSM began within the Graphics Arts Department of Ford Motor Company

With wish lists of foster children in hand, women of the Ford Motor Company's Graphics Arts Department typing group joyfully shopped and wrapped gifts, with their packages overflowing the company's supply and mail rooms. The excitement was contagious. Soon, the men got involved in fulfilling children's wish lists.

Children reside in foster care across the entire state of Michigan, which is why pilot Taki Kortidis initially volunteered to fly to the northern Michigan locations. He was soon joined by pilot Dave Larson to assure gifts made it to their destinations.

Every year, the effort drew more and more employees into volunteering. "It was exciting to see how everyone got involved in such a wonderful charitable event!" remembers Patricia Stanton, retired computer photo typesetter, Ford Motor Company.



2017

Asked to reflect on his experience as a volunteer pilot, Doug Conciatu wrote...



What a coincidence. I was looking at my logbook last night and came across my first Operation Good Cheer flight. It was in 1990. A good friend of mine, Dennis Pietraz, introduced me to his friend Taki and to OGC, and the rest is history.

As you might imagine, there were many years the weather was just too bad to fly, so we loaded up the car and delivered gifts throughout Southeast Michigan and the Thumb—at times, in some rather interesting conditions, but we always got the job done.

In another life, I was chief of the Huntington Woods Volunteer Fire Company. During my tenure, the Fire Company adopted a number of kids. We'd make a day out of it, with members shopping and then meeting at a restaurant for dinner and a wrapping party. It was a total group effort and great fun. I have been retired for 19 years now, and I'm happy to report the Fire Company crew is still supporting Operation Good Cheer. What a great feeling when you plant a seed and are able to see it grow.

For me, it was never about the flying as much as it was about the kids. I am so fortunate in every aspect of my life that the shopping and the sorting on Friday and, yes, even the flying on Saturday was the least I could do for people who were dealt some pretty tough blows in life. My only wish is that they somehow knew that someone was thinking and caring about them.



Acknowledging the generosity of donors and volunteers

We would love to list every single donor, pilot, truck driver and volunteer who has supported Operation Good CheerSM during its first 50 years, but we don't have room in this small booklet! As a nod to all those generous hearts, we list below those who contributed to the 2019 event.

Thank you, everyone!

14th Ave Cartage
David Abbott
ACC Flint
Larry Adams
Maureen Adams
AGS Automotive
Steven Aird
Ameer Al-jabiri
Alex Arts
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Leo Burke
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Kelly Burris
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Donald Burt
Dorthea Burton
Jason Burton
Michael Burwell
Cheryl Bush

In 2019...

Thanks to **79 foster care agencies** that participated, we were able to fulfill Christmas wishes for **7,159 foster children** across Michigan—our biggest year ever.



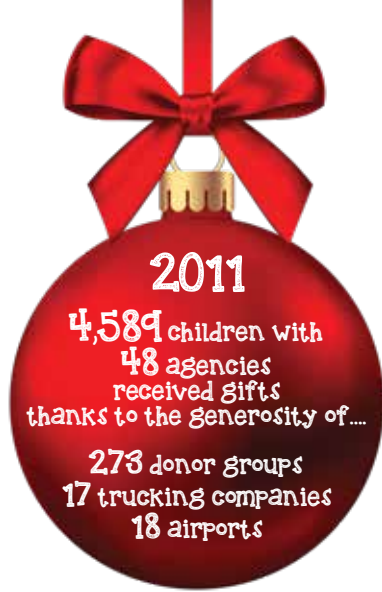
The event began on Friday, December 6, 2019, at Pentastar Aviation in Waterford, MI. Thanks to **290 compassionate donor groups and individuals**, we had the pleasure of unloading and sorting **21,477 gifts** that were transported by **40 volunteer trucking companies**.

With beautiful weather as a backdrop on Saturday, December 7, 2019, the "Spirit of Good Cheer" soared across the Michigan skies, with **250 volunteer pilots** delivering thousands of gifts to appointed destinations. The "Spirit of Good Cheer" also cruised along Michigan highways as our **volunteer truck drivers** drove throughout the day, as well, to ensure that every present was delivered to participating agencies whose staff eagerly awaited their arrival.



Operation Good CheerSM 2019 was a great success. We are looking forward to 2020 and celebrating 50 years with our dedicated volunteers, donors, pilots, and supporters.

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 Bill Bye
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We are grateful to our generous pilots, volunteers, and donors and wish to be as accurate as possible. If your name is missing or a mistake has been made, please contact sherry@cfsm.org so that we can update our records. Thank you.

How you can help Operation Good CheerSM

Sponsor a child

- As many as 7,000 children will need donors each year.
- Each child may be sponsored by an individual donor or by a donor group such as a family or company.
- Your generosity benefits a child who will show their appreciation with a thank-you note.

Volunteer

- Volunteer pilots and truck drivers are needed to fly and transport gifts across the state for the “Spirit of Good Cheer” distribution.
- Volunteers are needed for the ground crews in December.

Give

- Consider donating much-needed supplies—wrapping paper, tape, or clear plastic bags.
- Monetary donations for Operation Good CheerSM are accepted throughout the year.

Contact

- Contact CFSM if you would like to sponsor a child, pilot a flight, transport gifts, or donate supplies or funds! Visit www.cfsm.org and look for the **Operation Good Cheer** tab.

The Children's Entitlement Fund

The Children's Entitlement Fund (CEF) was developed to bridge the gap between provisions provided by the State of Michigan for children in foster care or kinship care and the actual needs which shape, influence, and promote a healthy, happy life for children in care. Through partnerships with multiple agencies, The Children's Entitlement Fund provides enriching and sustaining items and activities for children in care that might otherwise be unavailable to them.

Life sustaining items can improve quality of life; examples include orthodontic work, ramps or handicapped accessible equipment, specialized formula and supplements for infants, and even advanced optical options for a child.

Enrichment activities for children in care are equally valuable. Participation in the school band, going to summer/sports camp, or even receiving tutoring services can have a lasting positive effect on a child's life through heightened self-esteem, happiness, and optimism.

This restricted fund relies entirely on donations. With help from generous individuals and companies, CEF aims to enrich the lives of foster children for many years to come.

Learn more at <https://www.cfsm.org/c-e-f>.





**Child and Family
Services of Michigan, Inc.**

is a private, statewide, nonsectarian, nonprofit organization that originated in 1891 as the Michigan Arm of the American Education Association. For nearly 130 years, CFSM has provided quality social services through member agencies across the state of Michigan.

As a 501(c)(3) charitable organization, your donation is tax deductible as allowed by law.

Thank you for your consideration in our mission and service to Michigan children in foster care. For more information, please contact our office or visit www.c fsm.org and look for the **Operation Good Cheer** tab.

Child and Family Services of Michigan, Inc.

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Lansing, MI 48909-7095

517-349-6226

www.c fsm.org



To learn more and see the excitement surrounding **Operation Good CheerSM**,
check out Facebook!

<https://www.facebook.com/Operation-Good-Cheer-116858763609/>